

So You Want to Buy a Gypsy Horse?

By Mary Graybeal



You've seen their photos in calendars and in magazines, and possibly seen some in person, and now you think you're ready to start seriously shopping for a Gypsy Horse. Where do you start?

First, you should understand that the GH, as a breed, contains a lot of variability in body type, size, and color. Those who have been through the process suggest that, before you make any decisions, you should do two things.

The first is to educate your eye. You can do so by browsing as many web sites as you can to zero in on what type of GH you'd like and, if possible, see as many in person as possible. Not only are you educating yourself as to what constitutes good conformation in a GH but also in what your own preferences are.

For instance, some GHs have refined heads, almost Arabian in their delicacy, whereas others have a head more akin to that of a Shire or Clydesdale. If head type is important to you, then you'll be able to narrow your search.

Another area of preference is coat color and pattern. The first GHs imported here were black and white, and for a long while, this was the only color/coat pattern desired. But, as in many areas, GH color has its fads. A fabulous solid black stallion with white feathering, the hair starting at the knees and growing down to cover the hooves, was imported to the U.S., and solid blacks suddenly became highly desirable.

This trend passed, and, at the moment, exotic colors are in demand; buckskins, palominos, and silver dapples, whether in spotted or solid coat patterns, are all commanding high prices. And, we've noticed that the West Coast seems to prefer chestnuts. Although color is certainly the icing on the cake, we recommend you look at the whole horse and not select just for color alone.

Along with educating your eye, decide what you'd like to use this horse for, as this may dictate your desired horse's size and the quality of movement. The GH comes in a range of sizes, although around 14.2 hands seems to be the most common height. If you plan to ride your Gypsy, take your own height into consideration. You will find, however, that a GH you might consider small for your size fills your leg nicely. Gypsies are typically thick bodied.

Should you wish to drive, a smaller Gypsy would be suitable. A shorter horse is much easier to groom and harness than a larger one. Moreover, the driver can see over a smaller horse to view the road ahead whereas he cannot over a larger one.

Once you've decided, in general, what the characteristics of your ideal Gypsy should be, you are ready to begin actively shopping. Here you face the decision as to whether to import from overseas or to buy domestically. There are pros and cons to each.

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tawney falls farm



Tawney falls rioghan

(Pronounced REE-awn, Gaelic for "Little King")

Ri was imported in utero and foaled June 17, 2004. His sire is reportedly the Holmes stallion. We are working on DNA verification. His dam is our good mare Ceili. Ri stands at just 13hh. He has solid heavy bone and tons of feather. His first foal, a filly, was born this June. She is quite a chunk! Ri will be standing at stud to only 6 outside mares for the 2009 breeding season. Stud fee is \$1000 including \$250, non-refundable booking fee. Call or email for contract.



Photo: Debby Thomas/AnimalArtandPhotography.com

Stacey, Tom, Lucas and Ceara Cullen • Appomattox, VA
434-983-2360 • scullen323@yahoo.com • www.tawneyfallsfarm.com

3 Gypsies



Painted Hills Phoenix
June 15, 2008 colt.
(Master Ace x Senorita)
He is a small boy - only about 11hh at 6 months. He would be a lovely kids pony as he is small.

Painted Hills Hijack
black colt. (Playboy x Bijoux)
Hijack or Jack as we call him is a sweet charmer who will melt your heart when you meet him. Quiet & sweet.



Painted Hills Dyna
May 10, 2008 filly.
(Taliesin x Grace)
She is a b&w and will be a large girl. She is out of our mare Grace and the stallion Taliesin.



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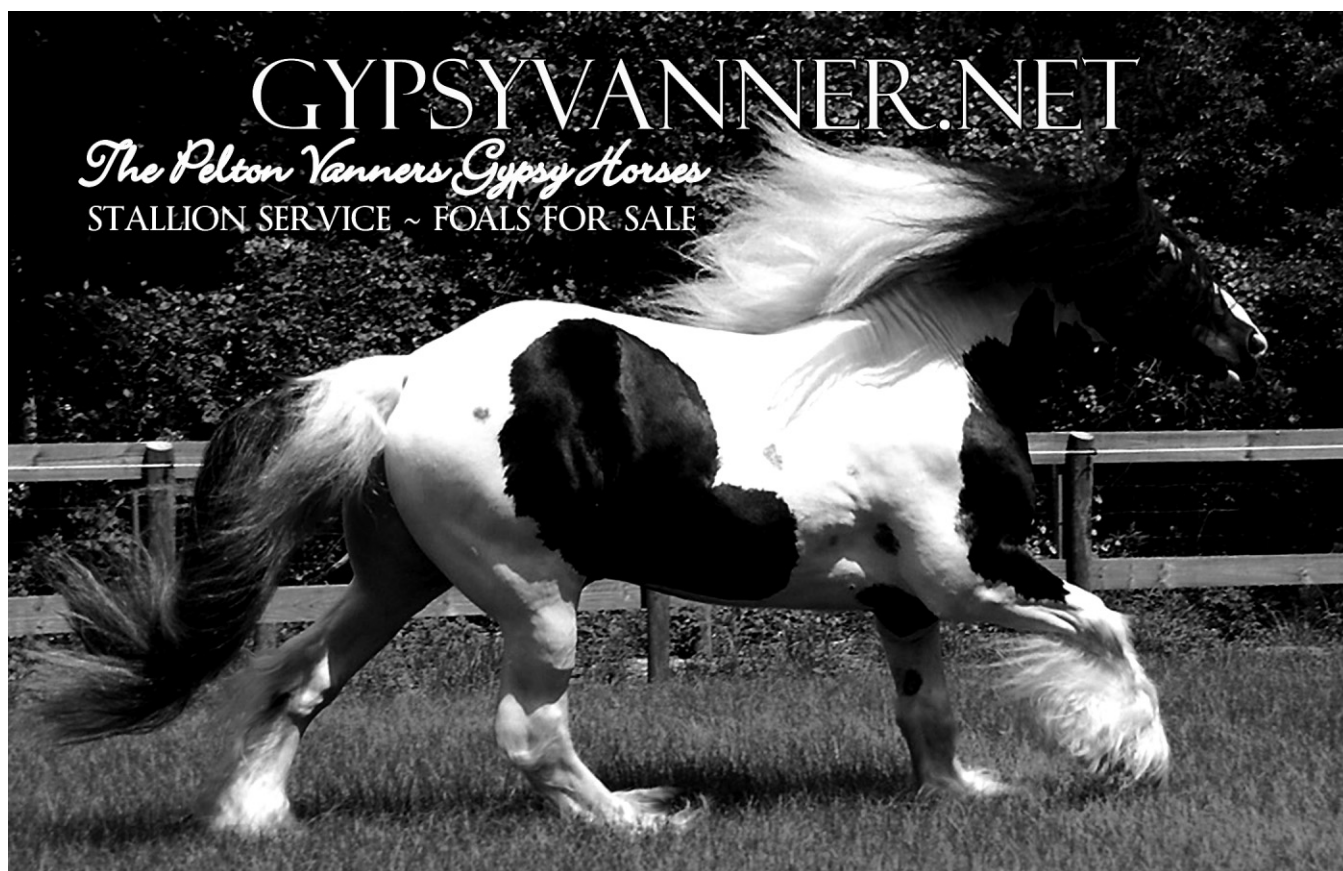
In the current economic downturn, you will probably find a horse much more reasonably priced here in the U.S. than you would an import because of the costs associated with importing. These costs, which consist of the cost of transporting the horse across the ocean to America and of time spent in quarantine, vary as to whether the horse is adult or below three years of age. The cost of importing an under-three-year-old is currently around \$6,000. For stallions and mares, it is considerably more because the horse must remain in quarantine a longer time.

For instance, you might purchase a colt who is below three years of age for £2,000, which, with current exchange rates, would equal around \$3,000. With current transport and quarantine costs of around \$6,000, the cost of your colt is already up to \$9,000.

Moreover, in general, a horse you purchase domestically has been handled from birth, had hoof care, been dewormed, had his vaccinations, and had at least minimal ground training. Although not always true, an import will likely not have had these things done to him. Your imported horse, especially a young one, will probably not know how to lead.

On the other hand, importing has a certain thrill, especially if you can find a bloodline not widely represented in this coun-

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try. Like GH colors, the popularity of stallions seems to run in fads. An offspring of a well known stallion overseas or a mare in foal to such a stallion may be much more marketable here than if the stallion is in the U.S. The reason is that an overseas stallion's bloodline is more limited here.

Whether you import or buy domestically, here are some things to keep in mind. First, do not be afraid to bargain. All the seller can say is no, and you have nothing to lose by making an offer less than the asking price. Second, buy from a reputable seller. Ask for references. Third, ask for, at a minimum, basic conformation photos with the horse standing squarely. These photos should show front, back, and both sides. If possible, get video. One aspect of GHs that has been minimized but will become increasingly important is quality of movement.

Fourth, always get a prepurchase vet check before you hand over any money. The extent of the prepurchase can vary widely, and what's typically included in Great Britain differs from what is included here. Talk to your vet about what you need included in your prepurchase, and don't hesitate to have your vet go over the results of the prepurchase with you and weigh in with his opinion.

A minimal vet check should include listening to the horse's heart and lungs and checking eyes and ears. The vet performs flexion tests, if the horse cooperates, to detect leg

problems. Various blood tests can be performed, but, again, you would need to talk to the vet performing the prepurchase to see what is recommended. From there, prepurchases can be as extensive (and expensive) as you care to make them, including x-raying each bone in the horse's legs. Most of us will not need this extensive a vet check, however.

There are some items we highly recommend that you include in your prepurchase. The Gypsy is prone to fungal infestations under his feathers, which provide a warm, moist breeding ground. Once the infestation is well started, mites may complicate the problem. If you see your GH stamping his feet or frequently rubbing his lower leg against his salt block, scratches and/or mites may be the problem. In a prepurchase, get your vet to check for the presence of scratches, which feel like scabs, under the feathers. Should the vet doing your prepurchase find scratches on the horse's legs, however, don't panic. Many Gypsies, as well as other horses, have scratches, and they are treatable.

Another, not-so-benign skin condition that can be found under the feathers is chronic progressive lymphedema or CPL. UC Davis describes CPL as causing "thickening and folding of the skin on the lower limbs and lymphatic system degeneration." Symptoms are "painful lower leg swelling, large nodule formation that interferes with normal pastern

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movement, and permanent skin ulceration." Fortunately, this condition, which affects Belgians, Shires, and Clydesdales as well as Gypsies, appears to be quite rare. Nonetheless, a prepurchase should include a thorough examination of the skin under the feathers.

We recommend two other items be included in a vet check. If you are purchasing a mare, include in your reproductive exam verification that the mare has milk ducts in her udders. This is often overlooked, and mares have been found who lack them and so cannot provide milk for their foals. Also, have the vet measure the horse at the withers as part of his check. Especially overseas, horse heights are exaggerated or estimated on the high side. We imported a mare advertised to be 15 hands, but, when she arrived, we measured her as only 13.2 hands in height. It's



a standing joke that Gypsy Horses shrink in transit to this country.

Finally, ask the vet doing the prepurchase how the horse behaved during the exam. Was he hard to handle? Did he object to his hooves being picked up? Was he head shy?

Should you be satisfied with the results of your prepurchase, our last recommendation is to insure your horse the moment you pay for him.

Most equine insurers will provide at least mortality insurance on a purchased horse, even if he is overseas. Some may provide health insurance also.

We hope these suggestions prove helpful. They cannot include all situations you may encounter and are meant as an introduction only. For instance, we did not touch on the particular issues with importing a breeding stallion. We urge you to thoroughly research any issues pertinent to your particular situation before purchasing. If you feel you need advice from other Gypsy Horse enthusiasts, feel free to contact the Gypsy Horse Association's Secretary at ghasecretary@yahoo.com, and, if she cannot answer your questions, she will put you in touch with someone who can. In addition, you may want to interview several owners about an issue as experiences and opinions will vary. Best of luck in your search for your perfect Gypsy!




Julie Goodnight

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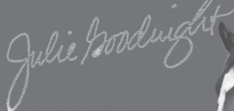



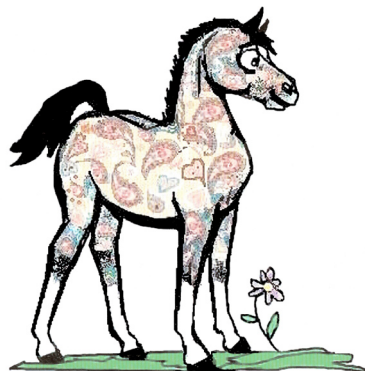
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